

Network for Inter faith Concerns

Christian-Muslim News Digest Issue 2 2010

Christian-Muslim News Digest

Introduction

Welcome to the second issue of the Digest for 2010. This issue reports on the current situation in Jos, Nigeria, where the editor, John Chesworth, spent most of April. It also reports on the recently published Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life research, *Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa*. In Kenya, the place of Kadhi Courts in the proposed new Constitution is raising tensions as the country prepares for a referendum. There is a report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's visit to the Holy Land. As a follow-up to the reports on Islam4UK in the previous issue of the Digest, an article by Nick Chatrath is reviewed.

Jos up-date~

In Nigeria every State has a motto, which appears on vehicle licence plates. The motto for Plateau State, where Jos is the State Capital is "Land of Peace and Tourism", which sadly at the moment is most inappropriate.

The Digest has reported several times on the situation in Jos, where there has been a cycle of outbreaks of violence since 1994. During April 2010, I spent three weeks in Bukuru, a suburb of Jos. This is a reflection on what I found whilst there.

Near to where I was staying was Bukuru market which was burned down in January this year, as were several nearby streets of houses where most of the residents were Christians. I was told that the destruction of houses was well co-ordinated and that householders were warned to get out; their goods were looted and loaded into lorries before the houses were set alight. In one incident, a Muslim neighbour suffered the same fate after remonstrating with the attackers.

The atmosphere is tense and there are frequent incidents, both within Jos and in the surrounding rural areas. These often seemed to be 'tit-for-tat' killings, or when someone had wandered into the wrong area. It was clear that both Muslims and Christians were perpetrators as well as victims of violence. Whilst I was there it was reported that taxi motorbikes were to be restricted in their movements, as they were regarded as having exacerbated events during the January crisis by facilitating the rapid deployment of those who carried out the violence, however this restriction did not appear to be enforced.

There are road blocks at regular intervals on approaches to Jos and a heavy Police/Military presence. However the security forces appeared to be reluctant to patrol away from the road blocks. There is a nightly curfew beginning at 7.00 pm.

One incident on the main road from Abuja to Jos occurred on 20 April 2010 when Berom youth put up road blocks near the village of Riyom, the site of some of the January killings. They hauled out of their vehicles people suspected of being non-Indigenes, particularly Fulani, [seven of whom were reported to have been killed](#) before the Security forces intervened.

Sadly, the method of identifying the 'other' is typically a demand for them to recite the Lord's Prayer or Shahada (Muslim creedal statement), knowing that a non-Christian is unlikely to be able to recite the Lord's Prayer and a Christian probably will not be able to say the Shahada.

I was able to meet with the Anglican Archbishop of Jos, the Most Reverend Ben Kwashi, to assure him of the support and prayers of NIFCON and to learn from him about the situation in Jos.

Archbishop Kwashi agreed with the (then Acting) President Goodluck Jonathan that the crisis was not religious in origin, but rather the result of the Indigene/Settler issue, exacerbated by land issues, and that effective security was the way to control the situation.

The Archbishop saw that the root-cause of the cycle of violence was the break-down of law and order with perpetrators of violence acting with impunity. A culture of retaliation has built up with people not expecting to be detained or punished by the judiciary for their actions.

When arrests are made, those arrested are taken to Abuja, the Federal Capital, on the grounds that it is not safe for them to be held within the state. All too often, those arrested are then released once they arrive in Abuja. The judiciary is regarded as being both corrupt and inefficient.

This view was supported in general terms by General Muhammadu Buhari, a former head of state (1983-1985) and opposition presidential candidate in 2003 and 2007, when he spoke on 'Nigeria: Ten Years of Democracy' at

Oxford Research Network on Government in Africa at Oxford University on 10 May 2010. He listed the things needed in order to create a stable situation in Nigeria as a whole: enforcing the law [that exists] together with mutual respect, and good economic management.

Archbishop Ben Kwashi also complained of biased reporting by the British media. He was critical of the BBC's coverage of the crisis, seeing it as telling the story only from the Muslim perspective. BBC World television is watched via satellite by many Nigerians.

One area that raised particular concern for him was the reporting of the numbers of Muslims and Christians killed during the crisis. It was explained to me that when bodies were recovered, if they were taken to the mortuary efforts were made to identify the corpses, meaning that it could be known whether they were Muslim or Christian. However, when, as is often the case, bodies were taken to a local mosque to be laid out, they were usually reported as being Muslims. This has led to the perception that more Muslims than Christians have been killed and the distorted opinion that Christians 'must be' the instigators. This concern was echoed in my discussions with other people from Jos.

Archbishop Kwashi commented that Anglicans were working across the boundaries and divides with development and HIV/AIDS projects, whereas most of the other denominations, which are often ethnically-based, were more 'inward looking' and were not attempting to cross boundaries and to break down divisions.

Local broadcast media, such as Peace FM and Plateau State Radio-Television Network, reported daily incidents of violence. An example of the inefficiency of the system was cited on 22 April 2010. The morning news bulletin reported that the Fulani pastoralists arrested following the attacks on a village in January, who were initially taken to Abuja, the Federal Capital, were subsequently returned to Jos for the trial. The hearing on the previous day had been postponed, due to the relevant paperwork not being transferred with the accused.

The coverage in the local print media tends to be graphic; an example is the April 2010 issue of *Today's Challenge*, published by the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA). Its cover article was "Jos Massacre: How the military goofed", questioning the complicity in the killings of the military unit in Jos, "under the leadership of a ... Muslim", followed by "Mad butchers on the prowl", with gruesome photographic reportage of the killings in Dogo Nahawa. This magazine also reports, in "Protest for Peace and Justice", on the mass protest by women dressed in black who "stormed the House of Assembly [in Jos] .., to register their grievances with several of them carrying placards with gory pictures of the mutilated bodies of victims of the recent attack." The women submitted a plea to the House of Assembly, 'Enough is Enough', which expresses their anguish and concerns for the peace and progress of Plateau State. The magazine's report said:

Describing Plateau as "a melting pot" of different ethnic and religious identities with cultural diversity as a positive sign for national integration and peaceful co-existence [they] wondered why people who have long benefitted from the hospitality of Plateau are committed to destroying the peace and security for which the state is known. "Our hearts are full of pain, anguish and indeed outrage at the killing of un-suspecting residents including women, children and babies on the flimsiest excuse and slightest pretext of grievance" (page 17).

In "Endless search for peace in Jos", Ralph Madugu reported on a peace building conference held in Jos in March, which was organized by the Institute of Governance and Social Research in conjunction with the British Department for International Development (DfID). This was chaired by former president General Yakubu Gowon (1966-1975), who lives in Jos, with contributions from another former president Shehu Aliyu Shagari (1979-1983), who asked "If past national leaders fought to keep the unity of this country, what are the present leaders doing to sustain the unity of Nigeria and Middle Belt?" Former Head of Interim National Government Chief Ernest Shonekan (1993) explained that "the task of confidence building to restore peace in the land is the responsibility of every stakeholder on Plateau ... we must resolve to return Jos to what it used to be known". The peace building initiative is encouraging, but the writer of the article points out that even as the politicians were talking and being entertained with music and drama, mass burials were taking place of those who had been killed the previous night.

An opinion piece in *The Nation* "[War of attrition in Jos](#)" 27 April 2010 summarises the situation in Jos and sets it in its context; it bears out Archbishop Kwashi's views.

The Jos crisis started in the 1990s, but [the] government's response has been periodically tardy and irresponsible. It was as if it sided with one of the camps or was afraid to bring the well-heeled sponsors to book. Consequently, the crisis has become recurrent and hundreds of people die whenever the killing frenzy seizes the combatants. Since 1994 when the crisis took a bloody turn no suspect has been prosecuted even though the riots have gone through at least four bloody cycles. It was only after the world outrage over Dogo Nahawa that the government showed any seriousness in bringing the killers to justice. But it may be too little too late. Not only do the killers on both sides openly perpetrate atrocities, they also openly justify it without fear of repercussion from the government.

Whilst I was in Bukuru, the Dean of Liverpool, Justin Welby, visited Jos. He had meetings with several religious leaders in Jos, including the Anglican Archbishop, Ben Kwashi. He was interviewed by Ed Stourton on the [Sunday programme](#) on BBC's Radio 4 on 9 May 2010. His report echoed much of what I had found. The interview included discussion of the transition of power following the death of President Umaru Yar'Adua on 5 May 2010.

Justin Welby had recorded an audio-report of those whom he had met and two clips were played of people who had been attacked in the village of Dogo Nahawa in January when around 500 people were killed.

In the BBC interview he summarized his findings by commenting that religion was playing an important part in conflicts in the middle belt of Nigeria, and that local religious leaders say that religion is one of the three main factors; the other factors being economic and communal/ethnic.

He found Jos to be very volatile, and becoming ghettoized, and described security as difficult, with continuous violence occurring on a low level, and with reported disappearances of individuals.

He mentioned the Anglican Church under Archbishop Kwashi and "its enormous capacity to face the extraordinary situation that it is in". He also commented that there were very able Muslim leaders and those with mediating skills.

Resources:

Links to articles that look at the Jos situation:

Christian-Muslim News Digest

"Electoral violence in Plateau State, Nigeria" January 2009

<http://nifcon.anglicancommunion.org/digest/docs/digest07.cfm>

"Nigeria: Bishop commissions mosque project in Langtang" October 2009

<http://nifcon.anglicancommunion.org/digest/docs/digest10.cfm>

"Nigeria: Jos violence breaks out again" January 2010

<http://nifcon.anglicancommunion.org/digest/docs/digest11.cfm>

Phil Ostien *Jonah Jang and the Jasawa: Ethno-Religious Conflict in Jos, Nigeria*

http://www.sharia-in-africa.net/media/publications/ethno-religious-conflict-in-Jos-Nigeria/Ostien_Jos.pdf

An analysis of the November 2008 violence in Jos.

Jan H. Boer *Nigeria's Decades of Blood: 1980-2002* <http://www.socialtheology.com/islamica.asp>

A nine volume work, which gives an overview of Nigeria's religious riots from 1980-2002, provides documentation and reportage of events not only in Jos but also other places.

TCNN Research Bulletin 52 Gwamna Dogara Je'adayibe and Dr. Amango A. Kudu, "Sliding towards Armageddon:

Revisiting Ethno-Religious Crises in Nigeria," pages 30-44 March 2010

http://www.tcnn.org/index_files/rb52.gwamna.html

References:

Today's Challenge Volume 5.2 April 2010

"Jos Massacre: How the military goofed" pages 8-10 April 2010

Ralph Madugu "Mad butchers on the prowl" pages 10-15 April 2010

Ralph Madugu "Protest for Peace and Justice" pages 16-19 April 2010

"Endless search for peace in Jos" pages 20-21 April 2010

The Nation

"Seven Killed in Plateau" 21 April 2010

<http://thenationonlineng.net/web2/articles/43834/1/Seven-killed-in-Plateau/Page1.html>

"War of attrition in Jos" page 64 27 April 2010 <http://thenationonlineng.net/web2/articles/44462/1/War-of-attrition-in-Jos/Page1.html>

BBC Justin Welby interview with Ed Stourton on Sunday, 9 May 2010 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qnb>

Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life report [**Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa**](#) was published on 15 April 2010. The Pew Forum is part of the Pew Research Center, a Washington-based non-partisan, non-advocacy organization. It undertakes surveys, demographic analyses and other social science research on important aspects of religion and public life in the U.S. and around the world. Its main areas of research are: Religion and American Society and Religion and World Affairs.

This report is based on interviews with more than 25,000 people, conducted in 19 sub-Saharan African countries, between December 2008 and April 2009. The interviews were conducted 'face to face' in a variety of languages, with over 100 different questions being asked. The subjects covered a wide range of topics grouped under the following headings: Beliefs & Practices, African Traditions, Morality & Culture, Politics & Society. The results are presented for each of the 19 countries, with responses from Christians and Muslims being differentiated.

The Executive summary states:

The vast majority of people in many sub-Saharan African nations are deeply committed to the practices and major tenets of one or the other of the world's two largest religions, Christianity and Islam. Large majorities say they belong to one of these faiths, and, in sharp contrast with Europe and the United States, very few people

are religiously unaffiliated. Despite the dominance of Christianity and Islam, traditional African religious beliefs and practices have not disappeared. Rather, they coexist with Islam and Christianity. Whether or not this entails some theological tension, it is a reality in people's lives: Large numbers of Africans actively participate in Christianity or Islam yet also believe in witchcraft, evil spirits, sacrifices to ancestors, traditional religious healers, reincarnation and other elements of traditional African religions.

Christianity and Islam also coexist with each other. Many Christians and Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa describe members of the other faith as tolerant and honest. In most countries, relatively few see evidence of widespread anti-Muslim or anti-Christian hostility, and on the whole they give their governments high marks for treating both religious groups fairly. But they acknowledge that they know relatively little about each other's faith, and substantial numbers of African Christians (roughly 40% or more in a dozen nations) say they consider Muslims to be violent. Muslims are significantly more positive in their assessment of Christians than Christians are in their assessment of Muslims.

There are few significant gaps, however, in the degree of support among Christians and Muslims for democracy. Regardless of their faith, most sub-Saharan Africans say they favor democracy and think it is a good thing that people from other religions are able to practice their faith freely. At the same time, there is substantial backing among Muslims and Christians alike for government based on either the Bible or sharia law, and considerable support among Muslims for the imposition of severe punishments such as stoning people who commit adultery.

The on-line version of the report also includes details of how each question was asked and the responses to each question in each country (pages 71-324), allowing further analysis to be carried out. The on-line interactive database is also informative for those with interest in a particular country as it is possible to view the detailed results of each country to each question.

The report received wide coverage; many of these articles picked up on some of the more sensational elements and failed to dig deeper into the data.

Most of the coverage came as the report was published; the headlines give some indication as to the contents of the articles: *Washington Times* Julia Duin "[Christians, Muslims almost equal in numbers in Africa: Proximity a flash point for conflict](#)" 16 April 2010; *Voice of America* Selah Hennessy "[Survey Finds One-Quarter of Africans Fear Religious Conflict](#)" 15 April 2010; BBC, Christopher Landau "[Africa goes to church, the mosque and the witch doctor](#)" 15 April 2010; *Daily Nation* "[Report Shows Broad Tolerance Among Religions](#)" 16 April 2010. A more considered article by Rebecca Paveley was published by the *Church Times* "[Study suggests Christians and Muslims have mutual respect](#)" on 7 May 2010.

Whilst the report itself is an impressive piece of work and helps to provide a 'snapshot' of opinions in a range of countries, some of the questions and their interpretation need to be challenged. Some of these issues may have arisen out of the need to set questions that were relevant in all the countries and which could also be asked of both Christians and Muslims. In some cases it appears that the question may have been understood by those interviewed in a different way than that intended by the compilers.

In the Executive Summary there is a section on "Views of Religious Conflict" (page 9). Interviewees were asked whether they thought "conflict between religious groups is a very big problem in their country". 58% of respondents in Rwanda and Nigeria agreed with this. This is sadly unsurprising for Nigeria, but it is not clear why the figure should be so high in Rwanda, especially when the numbers of Muslims interviewed were too few to be included in the analysis.

Another question (page 11) asked whether Christians "favor or oppose making the Bible the official law of the land in our country" and whether Muslims "favor or oppose making sharia or Islamic law, the official law of the land in our country". The median response from Christians was that 60% were in favour of "making the Bible the official law of the land" and from Muslims that 63% favoured "making sharia the official law of the land". But when the question asked is whether you "support religious jurisprudence" (page 51), the median for Christians was 12% and for Muslims 40%.

It is unclear what Christians, in particular, understood by "making the Bible the official law of the land", when they were not in favour of religious jurisprudence. It also shows the difference in understanding between Christians and Muslims about the relationship between state and religion.

The findings concerning the continued importance of African Traditional Religions in the lives of both Muslims and Christians (pages 33-35) are of interest. 20% of Christians and 26% of Muslims and 25% overall of those interviewed "exhibited high levels of belief and practice of African Traditional Religions". Also of significance is the admission of lack of knowledge of the other religion (page 37) where it was found that 64% of Christians said 'they know not very much or nothing about Islam' and 55% of Muslims said they "know not very much or nothing about Christianity". This highlights the relevance of learning about each other's religion in order to develop greater mutual understanding.

The report repays careful reading and raises some interesting points.

References:

- The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life *Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa* <http://pewforum.org/executive-summary-islam-and-christianity-in-sub-saharan-africa.aspx>
Interactive Database for *Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa* <http://features.pewforum.org/africa/>
Julia Duin in *Washington Times* "Christians, Muslims almost equal in numbers in Africa: Proximity a flash point for conflict" 16 April 2010. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/apr/16/christians-muslims-almost-equal-in-numbers-in-afri/>
Voice of America Selah Hennessy "Survey Finds One-Quarter of Africans Fear Religious Conflict" 15 April 2010. <http://www1.voanews.com/english/news/africa/Survey-Finds-One-Quarter-of-Africans-Fear-Religious-Conflict--90968864.html>
BBC Christopher Landau "Africa goes to church, the mosque and the witch doctor" 15 April 2010. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/8621916.stm>
Daily Nation "Report Shows Broad Tolerance Among Religions", 16 April 2010 <http://www.nation.co.ke/News/Report%20shows%20broad%20tolerance%20among%20religions%20/-/1056/900846/-/uqi0tq/-/index.html>
Church Times Rebecca Paveley "Study suggests Christians and Muslims have mutual respect" 7 May 2010. <http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=94183>

Kenyan Constitution and Kadhi Courts

Opposition to clause 170 in [The Proposed Constitution of Kenya](#) concerning Kadhi Courts (Islamic Courts) has become increasingly outspoken and is now threatening relations between Muslim and Christian communities in Kenya. The Kadhi Courts are a 'subordinate court' which deals with cases of 'Personal Status Law', such as marriage, divorce, custody and inheritance, where all those involved are Muslims. The clause concerning Kadhi Courts in the Kenyan judicial system has been in the Constitution since Independence.

In August there will be a referendum on a proposed new Constitution for Kenya. The proposed constitution was published in November 2009 and went through various revisions before the Attorney General, Amos Wako, published the final version on 6 May 2010. Church leaders, who have campaigned for a new constitution for the past ten years, are now campaigning to reject it.

Kenyan newspapers have been highlighting the churches' intention to tell people to vote 'No' in the forthcoming referendum on the proposed new constitution. The *Daily Nation* carried "[Church dares State to a duel as 'red card' campaign launched](#)" and "[Kenya churches confident of referendum win](#)" and the *Standard's* headline was "[ACK bishop changes tune, vows to back 'Yes'](#)". The *Friday Bulletin*, Issue 366, published by the Central Mosque in Nairobi, has raised concerns over the churches' increasingly antagonistic stance, "[US extremists bankrolling war on Kadhi courts](#)".

Following the December 2007 elections, the ensuing post election violence, and the agreement brokered by Kofi Annan, the process was begun to produce a new draft constitution. The Constitution of Kenya Review Act was passed in December 2008 and a Committee of Experts was appointed in March 2009 with the task of reviewing all previous drafts and reports. However, their *modus operandi* meant that they largely sidelined Civil Society initiatives. Civil Society, in this context, refers to non government organisations that are actively involved in advocacy and education.

The Committee of Experts published the *Harmonized Revised Draft Constitution* in November 2009; as expected, it retained a clause concerning Kadhi Courts.

Church leaders began to speak out against the Kadhi Courts clause. The House of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Kenya released a [press statement](#) concerning the harmonized draft constitution, including the resolution:

- xv. Remove the Kadhi Courts from the constitution in total since Parliament has the power to create any other courts through legislation.

The suggestion that Kadhi Courts should be legislated for through an Act of Parliament, rather than be included in the constitution, has raised concerns amongst Muslims, who are fearful that an Act of Parliament can be overturned by a simple majority in Parliament.

In January, a revision by a Parliamentary Select Committee of the harmonised draft constitution was published; this revision retained the Kadhi Courts clause. During subsequent parliamentary debates, Mutava Musimyi, the former General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Kenya, now an MP, tabled amendments to remove the Kadhi Courts clause, but these were voted out.

In March 2010, St. Paul's University, Limuru, held a conference on 'the place of Kadhi Courts in the Constitution'. Papers were presented by Christians and Muslims, representing those for and against retaining Kadhi Courts in the Constitution. This gave an opportunity for reasoned discussion on what has become a divisive issue.

The Anglican House of Bishops issued a [press statement](#) on 29 April 2010 reminding people that "the Constitution is meant for Kenya and not Kenya for the Constitution". It goes on to say:

We the Bishops of the Anglican Church of Kenya commend Kenyans for conducting themselves in a peaceful manner so far in the process in spite of the differing opinions and views. We urge a spirit of calm, sobriety and tolerance to persist until the National Referendum and subsequently to the logical conclusion of this process that is no doubt going to go down in the annals of Kenya's history. However we cannot fail to note the perception created that the Church does not want a new constitution.

The statement then lists some of their concerns about the proposed new constitution; whilst not referring to Kadhi Courts, it includes the clause "The need for all religions to be accorded equal status by the constitution which for all intents and purposes represents a multi-religious state". This highlights the concern at the implication that with Kadhi Courts 'enshrined' in the Constitution, one religious group is favoured over others.

Some Church leaders are saying that the retention of the Kadhi Courts clause is sufficient to cause Christians to vote against the proposed Constitution in the up-coming referendum, despite [them] thereby risking losing the progress on justice issues for which they have fought for so long.

Muslim leaders see this reaction as proof of the marginalisation of Muslims within Kenya. In some provinces, interfaith committees have united in mutual support, and condemned the divisiveness of attacks by these church leaders.

If the new proposed Constitution is rejected, Kadhi Courts will still be in place, as they are included in the present Constitution. In an Opinion piece in the *Daily Nation* "[Why the No campaign could destroy the Church](#)" 8 May 2010, Makau Mutua raises the prospect of the very real danger that people will vote overwhelmingly for the new constitution and that the church leaders who are vehement in saying 'No' will lose their credibility.

References:

Government of Kenya *The Proposed Constitution of Kenya* 6 May 2010 <http://www.nation.co.ke/blob/view/-/913208/data/157983/-/l8do0kz/-/published+draft.pdf>

Daily Nation

Walter Menya "Church dares State to a duel as 'red card' campaign launched" 8 May 2010

<http://www.nation.co.ke/News/Church%20dares%20State%20to%20a%20duel%20/-/1056/914748/-/rqm9a5z/-/index.html>

Walter Menya "Kenya churches confident of referendum win" 8 May 2010

<http://www.nation.co.ke/News/Kenya%20churches%20confident%20of%20referendum%20win/-/1056/914542/-/ygg9qk/-/index.html>

Makau Mutua "Why the No campaign could destroy the Church" 8 May 2010

<http://www.nation.co.ke/oped/Opinion/Why%20the%20No%20campaign%20could%20destroy%20the%20Church%20/-/440808/914652/-/1pmmr6/-/index.html>

Standard "ACK bishop changes tune, vows to back 'Yes'" 07 May 2010

<http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/news/InsidePage.php?id=2000009166&cid=159&story=ACK%20bishop%20changes%20tune.%20vows%20to%20back%20%E2%80%98Yes%E2%80%99>

Friday Bulletin "US extremists bankrolling war on Kadhi courts" 7 May 2010 Issue 366

<http://www.islamkenya.com/html/archives.html>

Anglican Church of Kenya

"ACK releases Press Statement on the Harmonized Draft Constitution" 27 November 2009

http://www.ackkenya.org/news/statements/harmonised_draft_constitution.pdf

"House of Bishops give a stand on the Proposed Draft Constitution" 29 April 2010

http://www.ackkenya.org/news/statements/hoB_press_statement_29thapril2010.pdf

Archbishop of Canterbury's visit to Jordan, Israel and Palestine

From 19-23 February the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, made a visit to Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian territories. He was accompanied by the Bishop of Clogher, Michael Jackson, who co-chairs the Anglican Jewish Commission and is Chair of the Anglican Communion Network for Inter-Faith Concerns (NIFCON).

The visit received very little media coverage. The BBC carried a brief report following his [meeting with Shimon Peres, the President of Israel](#), which did little more than list the leaders that he had met and state that the discussions with the President concerned relations between Israel and Palestine.

The *Church Times* carried a fuller report by Bill Bowder, "[Dr Williams visits Holy Land to support Christians](#)". The article reports on the Archbishop's concern for the continued existence of the Christian community in the Holy

Land. This was raised with King Abdullah of Jordan and with the three most senior heads of churches in Jerusalem, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, Theophilos III, the Armenian Patriarch, Torkom II, and the Latin Patriarch, Fouad Twal:

... [T]he leaders agreed “that everything possible needed to be done to ensure that the Christian communities in the Holy Land could continue to flourish”.

The Archbishop went to Ramallah in the West Bank and met the Palestinian Prime Minister, Dr Salam Fayyad, who told the Archbishop of his concern at “the continuing shrinking of numbers of Christians living on the West Bank and of the importance of halting and ideally reversing that process.” He spoke of the “vibrant and important contribution made by the Christian community and Anglican institutions such as St Luke’s Hospital in Nablus to the whole of the Palestinian community, regardless of faith”.

In Gaza, accompanied by the Bishop in Jerusalem, the Rt Revd Suheil Dawani, he visited the Anglican Ahli Arab Hospital. The director of the hospital, Suheila Tarazi, spoke of the “co-operative spirit” between Christians and Muslims. “We seek to bring hope to the hopeless and bring good news to the poor.”

The visit was an important one, carried out to show support for the Christian community.

The Archbishop’s own [web-site](#) carries a full report of the visit, through a series of press releases.

References:

BBC “Archbishop of Canterbury meets Israeli President Peres” 23 February 2010

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8530775.stm>

Church Times Bill Bowder, “Dr Williams visits Holy Land to support Christians” 26 February 2010

<http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=90006>

The Archbishop of Canterbury: Press releases <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/119>

“Archbishop in Jordan” 22 February 2010 <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/2762>

“Archbishop in Jerusalem” 23 February 2010 <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/2767>

“Archbishop in West Bank and Gaza” 24 February 2010 <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/2774>

Article on Anjem Choudary of Islam4UK

The last issue of the [Digest](#) reported on the proposed action by Islam4UK and its leader Anjem Choudary. An informative article by Nick Chatrath, “[Fighting the Unbeliever: Anjem Choudary, Musharraf Hussain and pre-modern sources on sūra 9.29, abrogation and jihad](#)” was published in the April 2010 edition of *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*. The article is based on interviews with Anjem Choudary and with Musharraf Hussein, who is the Director of the Karimia Institute in Nottingham and is also a President of the Christian-Muslim Forum. The article focuses on how Anjem Choudary and Musharraf Hussain justified their views on whether or not jihad (struggle for the cause of God) involves physical violence and on their interpretation of *sūra* 9.29 which begins ‘Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day ...’ Their responses are set into context with an examination of early Arabic sources which reflect on how ‘moderate’ and ‘extreme’ viewpoints have arisen. The analysis of the interviews serves to highlight the range of opinions amongst Muslims and the need to be aware of the continuing importance of early Muslim texts for our understanding of current attitudes.

Reference:

Nick Chatrath, “Fighting the Unbeliever: Anjem Choudary, Musharraf Hussain and pre-modern sources on *sūra* 9.29, abrogation and jihad”, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* Volume 21.2 April 2010 pages 111-127.

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~db=all~content=g920333856>